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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR P, CA/OCS/ACS (B.MARWAHA), NEA/IR (M.SPRING), AND
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [CASC](#) [MNUC](#) [IR](#) [SZ](#)

SUBJECT: SWISS STATE SECRETARY AMBUEHL COMMENTS ON IRAN
(P5-PLUS-1, HIKERS, CONSULAR ISSUES DIALOGUE?)

Classified By: Ambassador Donald S. Beyer; reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: In a December 2 meeting, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) State Secretary (Deputy FM) Michael Ambuehl provided Ambassador a readout of recent FDFA discussions with Iranian FM Mottaki and the Iranian ambassador in Bern. Ambuehl reported that FM Calmy-Rey had spoken via telephone the morning of December 2 with Iranian FM Mottaki. In that conversation, Calmy-Rey had urged the Iranian government to re-engage the P5-plus-1 and emphasized the importance of the opportunity represented by the P5-plus-1 proposal. FM Calmy-Rey also raised American citizen issues with FM Mottaki, and urged the Iranian government to release, as a gesture of goodwill, the three American hikers detained by Iran in July. Ambuehl said the FDFA was wondering whether it would be useful for the USG and Iran to engage in bilateral dialogue on consular issues, discreetly hosted by Switzerland. He said the Iranians had shown openness to the idea, but would never ask for such dialogue. Ambuehl emphasized that he was offering this suggestion informally, and had no intention whatsoever of pressuring the USG (or Iran) with regard to the idea. End Summary.

P5-plus-1

¶2. (S) Ambuehl reported that FM Calmy-Rey had spoken via telephone the morning of December 2 with Iranian FM Mottaki. In that conversation, Calmy-Rey had urged the Iranian government to re-engage the P5-plus-1 and had emphasized the importance of the opportunity represented by the P5-plus-1 proposal. Ambuehl said that he himself had conveyed the same message to the local Iranian ambassador (Keyvan Imani). Per Ambuehl, the Iranians were insisting that they are prepared to move forward, but "others (i.e., the P5-plus-1) must move first." He lamented the continued Iranian recalcitrance and commented that Iranian domestic politics (Majlis Speaker Larijani vs. President Ahmadinejad) and Iranian pride (the "need to save face") had further complicated the situation.

Three U.S. Citizen Hikers

¶3. (S) Ambuehl underscored that the Swiss government raises with Iranian officials the welfare of American citizens detained or missing in Iran at every appropriate opportunity, and will continue to do so. He said that FM Calmy-Rey had raised American citizen issues in her December 2 telephone conversation with FM Mottaki. Calmy-Rey had urged the Iranian government to release the three American hikers detained by Iran in July, saying this would be a gesture of goodwill that could improve the general atmosphere. Ambuehl

commented that it was not evident whether the Iranians had taken this message to heart -- "not clear what they will do."

Ambuehl conveyed a similar message to the local Iranian Ambassador, who referred to cases of alleged missing or detained Iranian citizens, implying the USG had some influence, and saying that the USG needs to move first.

Consular Issues Dialogue

14. (S) Ambuehl said the FDFA was wondering whether it would be useful for the USG and Iran to engage in bilateral dialogue on consular issues, discreetly hosted by Switzerland. He added that he thought confidential meetings would be more effective than publicly announced ones, and expressed confidence that confidentiality could be maintained, referring to the FDFA's previous experience of hosting successful trilateral rounds of talks between Turkey and Armenian without press leaks. Ambuehl said that such dialogue -- with the Swiss in the room, or "just serving the coffee" -- might be a way to advance both consular and broader confidence building interests. He reported that the FDFA had floated this idea with the Iranians, most recently in FM Calmy-Rey's December 2 telephone conversation with FM Mottaki. Per Ambuehl, Mottaki had indicated openness to the idea, but would never ask for such a dialogue, because "they never want to be the 'demandeurs'." Ambuehl noted that, if Switzerland had signals of interest from both sides, the Swiss could propose such a dialogue, to avoid either side having to ask.

15. (S) According to Ambuehl, Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia

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Leu had raised this topic with USG officials during her visit to Washington in November. Ambuehl emphasized, however, that he was offering this suggestion informally, and had no intention whatsoever of pressuring the USG (or Iran) with regard to the idea of such dialogue. He said that he would be fine with any USG answer, or even no feedback at all, on the suggestion.

BEYER